

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGUI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6814

INFO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, CT, UR

SUBJECT: CAR/SOVIET RECONCILIATION

REF: (A) BANGUI 0193 (NOTAL) (B) BANGUI 0096 (NOTAL)

1. THE GOCAR DEVOTED PRIME-TIME RADIOBROADCASTS ON MARCH 12 TO ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOVIET UNION, ANNOUNCING (A) SIGNATURE OF PRESS AGREEMENT BETWEEN TASS AND CENTRAL AFRICAN PRESS AGENCY (ACAP); (B) SPECIAL \$20,000 CONTRIBUTION OF MEDICINES AND MEDICAL INSTRUMENTS FROM SOVIET RED CROSS TO ALL VICTIMS OF LAST YEAR'S INUNDATIONS IN BANGUI; (C) RECEPTION ON MARCH 11 BY PRESIDENT BOKASSA OF SOVIET AMBASSADOR MELNIKOV WHO BROUGHT HIM "MESSAGE OF SUPPORT" FROM SOVIET LEADERSHIP CONCERNING FEBRUARY 3 ATTACK ON HIS LIFE; AND (D) A REPORT THAT A ZOYUZ SATELLITE HAD DISCOVERED AS EARLY AS 1964 THE BANGUI MAGNETIC ANOMALY ON WHICH THE US GEOLOGICAL SURVEY HAD FIRST PUBLISHED ARTICLES IN 1975.

2. TASS/ACAP AGREEMENT WHICH EXPIRES DECEMBER 31, PROVIDES THAT TASS WILL SUPPLY ACAP EQUIPMENT AND SPARE PARTS "ALMOST FREE OF CHARGE", PERIODIC REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE SERVICE OF THIS EQUIPMENT BY TASS TECHNICIANS FOR A TOKEN FEE OF \$250 MONTHLY AND DAILY WIRELESS FILE IN FRENCH. AT SIGNATURE CEREMONY PRESIDENT

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BOKASSA CALLED THE DATE "HISTORIC" IN THAT TASS/ACAP ACCORD IS

"FIRST OF ITS KIND SINCE INDEPENDENCE". BOKASSA EXPRESSED "COMPLETE SATISFACTION" WITH AGREEMENT AND SWORE "ETERNAL PERSONAL FRIENDSHIP" TO THE USSR.

3. IN RADIO COMMENTARY PRESIDENTIAL PRESS SPOKESMAN VICTOR TETEYA, REFERRING TO TASS AS THAT "LARGE INTERNATIONAL WIRE SERVICE", CRITICIZED THE "ABSENCE OF CERTAIN OTHER LARGE PRESS AGENCIES FROM THE CAR. HE WAS PRESUMABLY REFERRING TO THE LACK OF RESPONSE BY AFP, AP, UPI AND OTHER WIRE SERVICES TO PRESIDENT BOKASSA'S INVITATION LAST AUGUST 22 TO ESTABLISH BRANCH OFFICES AT BANGUI.

4. COMMENT: SEVERAL CONSIDERATIONS APPEAR TO UNDERLY BOKASSA'S SUDDEN REVERSAL IN HIS OFFICIAL ATTITUDE TOWARD THE SOVIET UNION WHOSE STOCK IN THE CAR HAD TUMBLED SHARPLY OVER PAST FOUR MONTHS. (A) PRINCIPAL AMONG THESE IS ANGOLA. BOKASSA IS INCREASINLY AWARE THAT HIS EARLIER ACTIVE OPPOSITION TO MPLA RECOGNITION AND TO SOVIET ANGOLAN POLICY IS NOW SOMEWHAT ACADEMIC. THE STAGE FOR HIS PUBLIC RECONCILIATION WITH USSR WAS SET ALREADY ON FEBRUARY 6, FOLLOWING A BLITZ VISIT BY MOBUTU. BOKASSA TOLD SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN PRESENCE OF ASSEMBLED DIPLOMATIC CORPS THAT ALTHOUGH HE STILL DEPLORED SOVIET ARMS POLICY IN ANGOLA AND AFRICA HE DID NOT WISH THIS TO BE PERMANENT OBSTACLE TO GOOD RELATIONS WITH USSR. (B) THERE IS ALSO AN ECONOMIC ASPECT. BOKASSA SEES PROSPECTS FOR ADDITIONAL SOVIET ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE IN THE MIDST OF HIS CURRENT GRAVE FINANCIAL SITUATION. ALTHOUGH VERY LITTLE ACTUAL MONEY OR SUBSTANCE IS INVOLVED IN THESE AGREEMENTS AND ACCOUNCEMENTS OF MARCH 12,; THEY OPEN UP THE POSSIBILITY THAT ADDITIONAL SOVIET ASSISTANCE WILL BE FORTHCOMING. AND, BOKASSA CANNOT AFFORD TO LEAVE ANY STONE UNTURNED IN HIS SEARCH FOR NEW SOURCES OF REVENUE. (C) FINALLY, THIS IS SIMPLY ANOTHER MANIFESTATION OF BOKASSA'S POLITICAL STYLE OF LEADERSHIP, KNOWN LOCALLY AS "CHACUN A SON TOUR", AND ITW OULD NOW APPEAR TO BE THE SOVIETS' TURN, FOR A WHILE AT LEAST, TO BE THE PRIVILEGED FRIENDS OF THE CAR. QUAINTON

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